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**CONNECTICUT INTERSCHOLASTIC  
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**CIAC COACHES UPDATE**

September 2013 Volume III Issue VII *Dr. Bob Lehr, Editor*

As the leaves begin to change color and the warm days of summer begin to fade into the cooler days of fall, athletes involved in a fall sport get a chance to demonstrate the skills they worked so hard on throughout the past three months. Also, the planning that our fall sports coaches worked so diligently on is now part of the everyday routine of practice.

Everyone associated with the CIAC hopes that all of your efforts to maximize your team's and its individual athletes talents pay off in the rich rewards that come with a successful season. We also hope that you enjoy your coaching experience and that you are always aware of the incredible impact you have on your student-athletes lives.

Please take a minute and read the brief article in this issue of Update.

You may wish to share it with your athletic director.

Good luck to all our fall sports coaches! For those of you coaching a winter or spring sport, now is the perfect time to look at your past coaching efforts and contemplate how you will approach your next coaching campaign.

Bob Lehr, Editor

**CEU MODULE OFFERINGS NOVEMBER 2013**



# HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS IN 2013

## SOME THOUGHTS

According to Dr. K. Anders Ericsson, in order for a person to achieve expertise in a sport or activity, he or she must invest approximately ten years or 10,000 hours of practice. Thus, children, parents, and coaches might see specializing in one sport as a fast-track to gaining the expertise needed to win starting positions, state championships, and even college scholarships.

However, these remarkable accomplishments (if they are actually reached) can come with some nasty baggage including social isolation, mental burnout, psychological stress, and overuse injuries such as stress fractures, Osgood-Schlatter & Sever's Diseases. Often times what remains is a kid with some very polished skills but no love for the sport, and a body that has had enough!

To combat these problems, young athletes should diversify their participation among numerous sports until at least the age of 14 or 15. When a young athlete diversifies his or her sports they reduce the physical impact by spreading it across different parts of the body, thereby allowing for a faster and more thorough recovery. Furthermore, sport diversification allows kids to learn transferable physical skills to other sports, not to mention introducing them to a larger group of active peers, along with more coaches and role models to assist with the tribulations of adolescence.

As a former coach I can attest to the excitement I felt when I had a group of players that were gung-ho and fully committed to my sport. I would become outwardly excited when they would ask, "What can I do this off-season to get better?" While I was tempted to respond selfishly with answers specific to my sport (most likely making our team better), I would try to think of the "whole child," causing me to reply with the question, "What other sports are you going to try this year?"

The cultures in high school athletic departments can be somewhat ambivalent. While coaches would like to believe that their colleagues always support them and their program, there is adequate reason for them to be skeptical. After all, with the trend of sport specialization, coaches at the same school can end up competing with each other for athletes – even when their seasons do not overlap. Often times I have heard coaches say, "I don't discourage kids from going out for another sport." Even if they do not outwardly deter kids from joining other sports, a coach's personal interests, reactions, and body language can be felt and heard sometimes even louder than their words.

Coaches need to begin supporting, collaborating with, and trusting the expertise of their colleagues – believe they will improve student-athletes on many levels (maybe even in ways the original coach cannot). Coaches must work together and encourage young athletes to diversify with additional sports.

The culture of the athletic department starts with the athletic director. Athletic directors must build a department and coaching staff that is conceived in collaboration, trust, and support for the high school's entire athletic program. True collaboration cannot exist among coaches if competition for athletes is going on – coaches must share the pool of athletes by supporting and even encouraging participation in other sports.



Athletic Directors may be thinking, “Easier said than done,” so here are a few tips:

- At these meetings, create buy-in with open communication. With the help of your coaches, make a list of the ways sport diversification can help the overall athletic program. Record the many transferable skills that are seen between two sports (cross-country gets wrestlers in shape during the fall season; basketball produces more athleticism for volleyball; track creates faster football players, etc.)
- List some fears or myths that each other’s sports or training regimens might present (heavy lifting on game days slows players down; football players lose bulk during wrestling season, coaches not wanting their best player to get hurt playing “other” sports, etc.). Once these fears are brought into the open and effectively addressed, coaches will be much more open to supporting each other’s programs.
- Make a policy for off-season training (weight room, speed training, fall baseball, etc.). Establish these as supplemental and should be held at different times of the day than practices or games. Example: Mandatory weight training sessions should take place before or during school – Not during another team’s practice. This will eliminate kids from having to prioritize between participating in Sport A, or training for Sport B.
- Create a huge master schedule to map-out and plan all summer sports camps so they do not overlap with each other. This will allow athletes to participate in multiple camps and reduce the competition coaches have for athletes’ time in the summer.
- Encourage (politely demand) that all coaches work in the weight room during the off-season and during the summer. This boosts cooperation amongst coaching staffs. No longer will the weight room be seen as belonging only to the one team. Conversely, the football coaches will not feel like they are babysitting athletes from other sports when they come to train.
- Encourage (politely demand) that all head coaches keep the scorebook and/or run the clock at the home games for the other sports programs. When athletes and parents see the head coaches supporting other programs, the tone will be set that the athletic department is diversified and supportive of all of its teams.

Athletic Directors, if you are met with some hesitation then know that you are creating change. If you have backlash or resentment from your coaches then sit down with them and hear them out. However, stay true to your vision that collaboration, trust, and support is the new culture that you want for your athletic department. To paraphrase Jim Collins from his book *Good to Great*, you are trying to get the right people on the bus, the wrong people off the bus, and the right people sitting in the right seats.

Coaches, this change might take some getting used to, but in the end sport specialization will be better understood and allowed as the exception rather than the norm. Kids will participate in multiple sports and you will be a member of a high school coaching staff built on collaboration and trust. These will combine to create a richer athletic culture at your school. However, the greatest improvement will be for your student-athletes’ individual experiences; they will be healthier physically, socially and psychologically.

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# NOVEMBER 2013 CEU MODULE OFFERINGS

## NO WALK IN REGISTRATIONS

Being offered at CIAC OFFICE  
30 Realty Drive, Cheshire, CT

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**Thursday, October 31 - 2013 from 6-9pm**

**Module 2R -Communication, Public Relations and Organization**

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**Friday, November 1 - 2013 from 6-9pm**

**Module 8 - Strength & Conditioning Design for Interscholastic Athletic Programs**

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**Saturday, November 2 - 2013 from 8:30-11:30 am**

**Module 10 - Gender Equity & Diversity Awareness for Coaches**

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**Saturday, November 2 - 2013 from noon-3pm**

**Module 7 - CIAC Guide To the Roles & Responsibilities of a Coach**

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**Saturday, November 2, - 2013 from 3-6pm**

**Module 18 - Dealing with College Bound Athletes**

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Registration for any or all of these 5 modules must be done online at

<http://www.ctcoachinged.org/CEU.html>

**NOTE TO COACHES**

In the event you are audited the State Department of Education will first check our data base electronically which will save you time and aggravation. Our data base will ONLY show courses taken with us. Be careful of any other entities offering courses to make certain they have SDE approval.

